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Potentially Dangerous Blood Clot Found In Nixon's Lung

LONG BEACH, Calif. (AP) — A potentially dangerous, dime-sized blood clot has been discovered in Richard M. Nixon's right lung, his doctor announced Wednesday. The former president took the news "as he normally takes anything else — it's another problem," the doctor said.

Nixon "has a hell of a will to live," Dr. John C. Lungren said at a news conference. "There is a very good chance of recovery, but it will take some time."

The clot lodged in the lung after breaking off from a vein in Nixon's left leg, where it had been created by chronic phlebitis, Lungren said. He described it as a "potentially dangerous situation but not critical at this time."

Asked if the gelatin-like clot could endanger Nixon's life, Lungren said only that the present risk is that a larger clot could form in the lung.

Lungren did not say how likely it was for another clot to form and it was unclear whether Nixon ever had a second clot in his leg.

"I hate to be lying here with this thing in my vein," Lungren paraphrased Nixon as saying. The doctor added, "His mood is remarkable considering what he's going through."

No surgery is contemplated, he said, but Nixon is continuing anticoagulant treatment to dissolve the clot and prevent a new one from forming. He will remain hospitalized through next week.

Nixon is taking two anticoagulants, Coumadin orally and Heparin intravenously. If the drugs are effective, the clot probably will go away.

But a knowledgeable Washington, D.C., doctor said, "Even though this clot doesn't seem to be severe, it doesn't mean it couldn't get worse. If a chunk of another clot broke off and got to the lungs ... that might be it."

If Nixon's condition worsened, doctors also might consider surgery, including emergency surgery in a severe case to enter the lung and remove a clot. Other surgical treatments include tying off certain blood vessels to prevent clots from reaching the lungs.

Nixon has no chest pain, but the lung clot is contributing to the extreme fatigue of the former president, Lungren said.

Lungren made his annoucement at Memorial Hospital Medical Center of Long Beach, where Nixon, 61, has been hospitalized since Monday for extensive treatment and tests. He was originally scheduled to stay only seven days.

There was no indication from

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Blood Clot

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Lungren whether the clot could keep Nixon from testifying at the Watergate cover-up trial. It begins next Tuesday.

The former president has been subpoenaed as a witness by both defendant John Ehrlichman and prosecutor Leon Jaworski. Jaworski has asked U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica to send an independent medical team to determine if Nixon can testify or give a deposition.

Press Secretary Ron Nessen said the chief White House physician, Dr. William Lukash, talked with Dr. Lungren by telephone and relayed a report to Ford at midafternoon.

Nessen said Ford "expressed pleasure that there was no imminent danger and that the former president is feeling reasonably well."

In response to a question, Nessen said he knew of no plans for Ford to visit Nixon in the Long Beach hospital. The President will be in San Francisco next Wednesday for a speaking appearance.

Lungren said the clot, which moved through blood vessels to the middle of the right lung, was found through tests Tuesday conducted by a specialist in nuclear medicine. Lungren said he did not know why the clot broke off or when it occurred.

The clot was discovered after two scans were made of Nixon's body using radioisotopes and an "Ohio Nuclear Camera."

The first scan, called a profusion scan, was designed to tell how well the lung was being supplied with blood. The second looked at the respiratory nature of the lung.

Lungren said in a statement, "Following consultation yesterday afternoon and late last night with Dr. Earl Kenneth Dore, director of the radioisotope lab at the Long Beach hospital, we find Mr. Nixon now has an embolus in the right midlung field of the lateral surface, which is a potentially dangerous situation but not critical at this time."